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NED BRACE.

CHARACTER OF A DROLL GEORGIAN.

[We trespass somewhat on our columns this week to insert the following story, and we hereby caution the reader not to pass it by on account of its length, as it abounds with the most exquisite humor, and will repay perusal.]—Charleston (S. C.) Gazette.

There are some yet living, who knew the man whose character I am about to delineate. I do not feel at liberty as yet to give the name of the person in question, and, therefore, he shall be designated for the present, by the appellation of Ned Brace.

This man seemed to live only to amuse himself with his fellow-beings, and he possessed the rare faculty of deriving some gratification of his favorite propensity, from almost every person with whom he met, no matter what his temper, standing or disposition. Of course he had opportunities enough of exercising his uncommon gift, and he rarely suffered an opportunity to pass unimproved. The beau in the pretence of his mistress, the top, the pedant, the purse-proud, the over-fastidious and the sensitive, were Ned's favorite game. These never passed him un injured; and against such, he directed his severest shafts. With these he commonly amused himself, by exciting in them every variety of emotion, under circumstances peculiarly ridiculous. He was admirably fitted to his vocation. He could assume any character which his humor required him to personate, and sustain it to perfection. His knowledge of the character of others seemed to be intuitive.

A three day's visit, which I once made with him to Savannah, placed him in a greater variety of scenes, and among a greater diversity of characters, than perhaps any other period of his life, embracing no longer time; and therefore, I will choose this for my purpose.

We reached Savannah, just at night fall, of a cold December's evening. As we approached the tavern of Mr. Blank, at which we designed to stop, Ned proposed to me that we should drop acquaintance, until he should choose to renew it. To this proposition I most cordially assented, for I knew, that so doing, I should be saved some mortifications, and avoid a thousand questions, which I would not know how to answer. According to this understanding, Ned lingered behind, in order that I might reach the tavern alone.

On alighting at the public house I was led into a large dining-room, at the entrance of which, to the right, stood the bar, opening into the dining-room. On the left, and rather to the centre of the room, was a fire-place, surrounded by gentlemen. Upon entering the room, my name was demanded at the bar: it was given, and I took my seat in the circle around the fire. I had been seated just long enough for the company to survey me to their satisfaction, and resume their conversation, when Ned's heavy footstep at the door turned the eyes of the company to the approaching stranger.

'Your name sir, if you please?' said the restless little bar-keeper, as he entered. Ned stared at the question with apparent alarm—cast a fearful glance at the company—frowned and shook his head in caution to the bar-keeper—looked confused for a moment—then as if suddenly recollecting himself, jerked a piece of paper out of his pocket—turned from the company—wrote on it with his pencil—handed it to the bar-keeper—walked to the left of the fire-place, and took the most conspicuous seat in the circle. He looked at no one, spoke to no one; but fixing his eyes on the fire, lapsed into a profound reverie.

The conversation, which had been pretty general before, stopped as short, as if every man in the room had been shot dead. Every eye was fixed on Ned, and every variety of expression was to be seen on the countenances of the persons present. The landlord came in—the bar-keeper whispered to him and looked at Ned. The landlord looked at him too with astonishment and alarm—the bar-keeper produced a piece of paper, and both of them examined it, as if searching for a signet with the naked eye. They rose from the examination unsatisfied, and looked at Ned again. Those of the company who recovered first from their astonishment, tried to revive the conversation; but the effort was awkward, met with no support, and failed. The bar-keeper, for the first time in his life, became dignified and solemn, and left the bar to care for itself. The landlord had a world of foolish questions to ask the gentlemen directly opposite to Ned, for which purpose he passed round to them every two minutes, and the answer to none did he bear.

Three or four boarders coming in, who were unapprised of what had happened, at length revived the conversation; not however until they had created some confusion, by enquiring of their friends, the cause of their sober looks. As soon as the conversation began to become easy and natural, Ned rose, and walked out into the entry,

With the first movement, all were as hushed as death; but when he had cleared the door, another Babel scene ensued. Some enquired others suspected, and all wondered. Some were engaged in telling the strangers what had happened, others were making toward the bar, and all were becoming clamorous, when Ned returned and took his seat. His re-entry was as fatal to conversation, as was the first movement of his exit; but soon recovered from the shock—with the difference, however, that those who led before, were now mute, and wholly absorbed in the contemplation of Ned's person.

After retaining his seat for about ten minutes, Ned rose again, enquired the way to the stable, and left the house. As soon as he passed the outer door, the bar-keeper hastened to the company with Ned's paper in his hand. 'Gentlemen,' said he, 'can any of you tell me what name this is?' All rushed to the paper in an instant—one or two pair of heads met over it with considerable force. After pondering over it to their heart's content, they all agreed that the first letter was an 'E' and the second a 'B' or an 'R,' and the d— himself could not make out the balance. While they were thus engaged, to the astonishment of every body, Ned interrupted their deliberations with 'gentlemen, if you have satisfied yourselves with that paper, I'll thank you for it.' It is easy to imagine, but impossible to describe the looks and actions of the company, under their surprise and mortification. They dropped off and left the bar-keeper to his appropriate duty, of handing the paper to Ned. He reached it forth, but Ned moved not a hand to receive it, for about the space of three seconds; during which time he kept his eyes fixed on the arch offender in awfully solemn rebuke. He then took it gravely and put it in his pocket, and left the bar-keeper, with a shaking aque upon him. From this moment he became Ned's most obsequious and willing slave.

Supper was announced; Mrs. Blank, the landlady, took the head of the table, and Ned seated himself next to her. Her looks denoted some alarm at finding him so near her; and plainly showed, that he had been fully described to her by her husband, or some one else. 'Will you take tea or coffee, sir?' said she. 'Why madam,' said Ned, in a tone as courteous as Chesterfield himself could have used, 'I am really ashamed to acknowledge and expose my very singular appetite; but habitual indulgence of it, has made it necessary to my comfort, if not to my health, that I should still favor it when I can. If you will pardon me, I will take both at the same time.'

This respectful reply, (which by the way, she alone was permitted to hear,) had its natural effect. It won for him her unqualified indulgence, raised doubts whether he could be the suspicious character which had been described to her, and begged in her a desire to cultivate a further acquaintance with him. She handed to him the two cups, and accompanied them with some remarks drawn from her own observation in the line of her business, calculated to reconcile him to his whimsical appetite; but she could extract nothing from Ned but monosyllables, and sometimes not even that much. Consequently, the good lady began very soon to relapse into her former feelings.

Ned placed a cup on either side of him, and commenced stirring both at the same time very deliberately. This done, he sipped a little tea, and asked Mrs. B. for a drop more milk in it.—Then he tasted his tea again and requested a small lump more of sugar in it—lastly he tasted his coffee, and desired a few drops more milk in that. It was easy to discover, that before he got suited the landlady had solemnly resolved, never to offer any more encouragements to such an appetite. She waxed exceedingly petulant, and having nothing else to scold, she scolded the servants of course.

Waffles were handed to Ned, and he took one; batter-cakes were handed, and he took one; and so on of muffins, rolls, and corn-bread. Having laid in these provisions, he turned into his plate, upon his waffle and batter-cake, some of the crumbs of the several kinds of bread which he had taken, different proportions, and commenced marching all together with his knife. During this operation the landlady frowned and pouted—the servants giggled—and the boarders were variously affected.

Having reduced this mess to the consistency of a hard poultice, he packed it all up to the side of his plate in the form of a terrapin, and smoothed it all over nicely with his knife. Nearly opposite to Ned, but a little below him sat a waspish little gentleman, who had been watching him; with increasing torments, from the first to the last movement of Ned's knife. His tortures were visible to blunder eyes than Ned's, and doubtless had been seen by him in their earliest paroxysms. This gentleman occupied a seat nearest to a dish of steak, and was in the act of muttering something about 'brutes' to his next neighbor, when Ned beckoned a servant to him,

and requested him 'ask that gentleman for a small bit of steak.' The servant obeyed, and planting Ned's plate directly between the gentleman's and the steak dish, delivered his message. The tasty gentleman turned his head, and the first thing he saw was Ned's party-colored terrapin, right under his nose. He started as if he had been struck by a snapping-turtle—reddened—looked at Ned, (who appeared as innocent as a lamb)—looked at the servant, (who appeared as innocent as Ned) and fell to work on the steak, as if he were amputating all Ned's limbs at once.

Ned now commenced his repast. He ate his meat and breads in the usual way; but he drank his liquids in all ways. First a sip of tea, then of coffee; then two of the first and one the last; then three of the last and one of the first, and so on.

His steak was soon consumed, and his plate a second time returned to the mettlesome gentleman 'for another very small bit of steak.' The plate paid its second visit, precisely as it had its first; and as soon as the fiery gentleman saw the half-demolished terrapin again under his nose, he seized a fork, and drove into the largest slice of steak in the dish, dashed it into Ned's plate, rose from the table and left the room, cursing Ned from the very remotest chamber of his soul. Every person at the table, except Ned, laughed outright at the little man's fury; but Ned did not even smute—nay, he looked for all the world, as if he thought the laugh was at him.

The boarders, one after another, retired, until Ned and the landlady were left alone at the table.

'Will you have another cup of tea or coffee, sir?' said she, by the way of convincing him that he ought to retire, seeing that he had finished his supper.

'No, I thank you madam,' returned Ned.

'Will you have a glass of milk and a cup of tea or coffee; or all three together?'

'No ma'am,' said Ned. 'I am not blind madam,' continued he, to the effects which my unfortunate eccentricities have produced upon yourself and your company; nor have I witnessed them without those feelings which they are well calculated to inspire in a man of ordinary sensibilities. I am aware, too, that I prolong and aggravate your uneasiness, by detaining you beyond the hour which demands your presence at the table; but I could not permit you to retire, without again bespeaking your indulgence of the strange, unnatural appetite, which has just caused you so much astonishment and mortification. The story of its beginning might be interesting, certainly would be instructing, to you if you are a mother; but I am indisposed at this time to obtrude it upon your patience, and I presume you are still less disposed to hear it.—My principal object, however, in claiming your attention for a moment at this time, is to assure you, that out of respect to your feelings, I will surrender the enjoyment of my meals for the few days that I remain in Savannah, and conform to the customs of your table. The sudden change of my habits will expose me to some inconvenience, and may perhaps affect my health; but I willingly incur these hazards, rather than to renew your mortification or to impose upon your family the trouble of giving me my meals at my room.'

The good lady, whose bitter feelings had given place to the kinder emotions of pity and benevolence, before Ned had half concluded his apology, (for it was delivered in a tone of the most melting eloquence,) caught at this last hint, and insisted upon sending his meals to his room. Ned reluctantly consented, after extorting a pledge from her, that she would assume the responsibilities of the trouble that he was about to give the family.

'As to your boarders, madam,' said Ned, in conclusion, 'I have no apology to make to them. I grant them the privilege of eating what they please, and how they please; and so far as they are concerned I shall exercise the same privileges, reckless of their feelings or opinions; and I shall take it as a singular favor if you will say nothing to them or any one else, which may lead them to the discovery, that I am acquainted with my own peculiarities.'

The good lady promised obedience to his wishes, and Ned, requesting to be conducted to the room, retired.

A group of gentlemen at the fire-place had sent many significant 'hems' and smiles, to Mrs. Blank, during her *tete a-tete* with Ned; and as she approached them, on her way out of the room, they began to taunt her playfully, upon the impression which she seemed to have made upon the remarkable stranger.

'Really,' said one, 'I thought the impression was on the other side.'

'And in truth, so it was,' said Mrs. B. At this moment her husband stepped in.

'I'll tell you what it is, Mr. Blank,' said one of the company, 'you'd better keep a sharp look-out on that stranger; our landlady is wonder fully taken with him.'

'I'll be bound,' said Mr. B., 'for my wife; the less like any body else in the world he is, the better will she like him.'

'Well I assure you,' said Mrs. B., 'I never had my feelings so deeply interested in a stranger in my life. I'd give the world to know his history.'

'Why then,' rejoined the landlord; 'I suppose he has been quizzing us all this time.'

'No,' said she, 'he is incapable of quizzing. All that you have seen of him is unaffected, and perfectly natural to him.'

'Then really,' continued the husband, 'he is a very interesting object, and I congratulate you upon getting so early into his confidence; but as I am not quite as much captivated with his unaffected graces as you seem to be, I shall take the liberty, in charity to the rest of my boarders, of requesting him to-morrow, to seek other lodgings.'

'Oh,' exclaimed Mrs. B. in the goodness of her heart, and with a countenance evincive of the deepest feeling, 'I would not have you do such a thing for the world. He's only going to stay a few days.'

'How do you know?'

'He told me so, and do let's bear with him that short time. He sha't trouble you or the boarders any more.'

'Why Sarah,' said the landlord, 'I do believe you are out of your senses!'

'Gone case!' said one boarder. 'Terrible affair!' said another. 'Betwixting little fellow,' said a third. 'Come, Mrs. Blank, tell us all he said to you? We young men wish to know how to please the ladies, so that we may get wives easily. I'm determined the next party I go to, to make a soup of every thing on the waiters, and eat all at once. I shall then become irresistible to the ladies.'

'Get along with your nonsense, said Mrs. B. smiling as she left the room.'

At eight o'clock, I retired to my room, which happened (probably from the circumstance of our reaching the hotel within a few minutes of each other), to be adjoining Ned's. I had no sooner entered my room, than Ned followed me, where we interchanged the particulars which make up the foregoing story. He now expended freely the laughter which he had been collecting during the evening. (He stated that his last interview with Mrs. Blank, was the result of necessity—That he found he had committed himself in making up and disposing of his odd supper; for that he should have to eat in the same way, during his whole stay in Savannah, unless he could manage to get his meals in private; and though he was willing to do penance for one meal, in order to purchase the amusement which he had enjoyed, he had no idea of tormenting himself three or four days for the same purpose. 'To tell you the honest truth,' said he, 'nothing but an appetite whetted by fasting and travelling, could have borne me through the table scene. As it was, my stomach several times threatened to expose my tricks to the whole company, by downright open rebellion. I feel that I must make it some atonement for the liberty I have taken with it; and therefore, propose that we go out and get an oyster supper before we retire to rest.' I assented; we set out going separately, until we reached the street.

We were received by the oyster-vender, in a small shop, which fronted upon the street, and were conducted through it to a back door, and thence, by a flight of steps, to a convenient room, on a second floor of an adjoining building. We had been seated about three minutes, when we heard footstep on the stairs, and distinctly caught this sentence from the ascending stranger: 'Aha, Monsieur Middletoong! you say you had bes oyster in the cittee? Well, me shall soon see.'

The sentence was hardly uttered, before the door opened, and in stert a gay, smerky little Frenchman. He made us a low bow, and as soon as he rose from his obeisance, Ned rushed to him in transports of joy—seized him by the hand, and shaking it with friendship's warmest grasp, exclaimed, 'How do you do my old friend—I had no idea of meeting you here—how do you do Mr. Squeezel-fanter? how have you been this long time?'

'Sair,' said the Frenchman, 'me tank you ver much to lub me so hard; but you mistake de gentleman—my name is not de Squeezel-fanter.'

'Come, come John,' continued Ned, 'quit your old tricks before strangers. Mr. Hall, let me introduce you to my particular friend, John Squeezel-fanter, from Paris.'

'Perhaps, sir,' said I—not knowing well what to say, or how to act in such an emergency—'perhaps you have mistaken the gentleman.'

'Begar, sair,' said Monsieur, 'he is mistake ebry ting at once. My name is not Ziaur, me play no trick, me is not de genilmong fren', me did not come from patee, but from Bordeaux—and me did not suppose dare was one man in all France, dat was name de Squeezel-fanter.'

'If I am mistaken,' said Ned, 'I humbly ask your pardon; but really, you look so much like my old friend Jack, and talk so much like him, that I would have sworn you were he.'

'Vell sair,' said Monsieur, looking at Ned—(though he might be an acquaintance after all—'vell sair, dis time you tell my right—my name is Jacques—Jacques Sancrie.'

'There,' proceeded Ned, 'I knew it was impossible I could be mistaken—your whole family settled on Sandy Creek—I knew your father and mother, your sister Patsy and Dilsy, your brother Ichabod, your aunt Bridget, your—'

'Mon Dieu, mon Dieu!' exclaimed the Frenchman, no longer able to contain his surprise: 'dat is von 'Merican familie. Dare was not one French familie hab all dat name since dis vor?' was made.'

'Now look at me, good Jack,' said Ned, 'and see if you don't recollect your old friend Obadiah Snoddenburg, who used to play with you when a boy, in Sandy Creek?'

'Vell, Monsieur Snoddenburg, me look at you ver well; and begar me never see you in de creek, nor out de creek—'Tis ver surprise, you not know one name, from one creek?'

'Oh, very well sir, very well, I forgot where I was—I understand you now perfectly. You are not the first gentleman I have met with in Savannah, who knew me well in the country and forgot me in town. I ask your pardon sir, and hope you'll excuse me.'

'He is ver will to know you now, sair, but begar me will not tell you one lie, to know you twenty-five or thirty years ago?'

'It makes no difference sir,' said Ned, looking thoughtful and chagrined. 'I beg leave, however, before we close our acquaintance, to correct one mistake which I made—I said you were from Paris—I believe on reflection, I was wrong—I think your sister Dilsy told me you were from Bordeaux.'

'Routre, de sist, Dils!—Here Monsieur Middletoong! My oyster ready!'

'Yes sir.'

'Vell, if my oyster ready, you give dem to my fren' Mons. Snoddenburg; and ask him be so good to carry dem to my sist' Dils, and my brother Ichabod on Sand Creek.' So saying he vanished like lightning.

The next morning at breakfast, I occupied Ned's seat. Mrs. Blank had no sooner taken her place, than she ordered a servant to bring her a waiter; upon which she placed a cup of tea and another of coffee—then ordering three plates, she placed them on it; sent one servant for one kind of bread, and another for another, and so on through all the varieties that were on the table, from which she made selections for plate No. 1. In the same way did she collect meats for plate No. 2—No. 3 she left blank.—She had nearly completed her operations, when her husband came to know why every servant was engaged, and no gentlemen helped to anything, when the oddly-tormented waiter met his eye, and fully explained the wonder.

'In God's name, Sarah,' said he, 'whom are you mixing up those messes for?'

'For that strange gentleman we were speaking of last night,' was the reply.

'Why doesn't he come to the table?'

'He was very anxious to come, but I would not let him.'

'You would not let him! Why not?'

'Because I did not wish to see a man of his delicate sensibilities ridiculed and insulted at my table.'

'Delicate devilabilities! Then why didn't you send a servant to collect his mixtures?'

'Because I preferred doing it myself, troubling the boarders. I knew that wherever his plates went, the gentlemen would be making merry over them, and I could not bear to see it.'

The landlord looked at her for a moment, with commingled astonishment, doubt, and alarm; and then upon the breath of a deep drawn sigh, proceeded—

'Well, d—n the man! He has'at been in the house two hours, except when he was asleep, and he has insulted one half my boarders, made fools of the other half, turned the head of my bar-keeper, crazed all my servants, and run my wife stark, staring, raving mad—A man who is a perfect clown in his manners, and who, I have no doubt, will in the end, prove to be a horse-thief.'

Much occurred between the landlord and his lady in relation to Ned, which we must of necessity omit. Suffice it to say, that her assiduous to Ned, her unexplained sympathies for him, her often repeated desires to become better acquainted with him, conspiring with one or two short-interviews which her husband saw between her and Ned, (and which consisted of nothing more than expressions of regret, on his part, at the trouble he was giving the family, and assurances on hers, that it was no trouble at all,) began to bring upon the landlord, the husband's worst calamity. This she soon observed, and